

On ECP Violations in Krio

Author(s): Dudley K. Nylander

Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society (1984), pp. 248-257

Please see “How to cite” in the online sidebar for full citation information.

Please contact BLS regarding any further use of this work. BLS retains copyright for both print and screen forms of the publication. BLS may be contacted via <http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/bls/>.

The Annual Proceedings of the Berkeley Linguistics Society is published online via [eLanguage](#), the Linguistic Society of America's digital publishing platform.

ON ECP VIOLATIONS IN KRIO*

Dudley K. Nylander

University of Manitoba

0. Introduction

One of the principles of grammar introduced in Chomsky (1981) is the Empty Category Principle :

- (1) Empty Category Principle (ECP)
 (α e) must be properly governed.¹

Proper government, as defined by Chomsky, falls into two categories (see footnote 1). Firstly, there is government by a lexical element of the (\pm N \pm V) type. In (2a), for instance, the empty category (e_i) is properly governed by the verb see, which is a lexical element of the (-N+V) type. Secondly, there is government by coindexation. In (2b), for example, the empty category in subject position (e_i) is properly governed by the coindexed trace in COMP, i.e., t_i .

- (2) a. Who_i did you see e_i ?
 b. Who_i do you think (_S t_i (_S e_i came?))

Kayne (1981) proposes a somewhat different formulation of the ECP. Pointing to the fact that

- (3) "... one might wonder why ECP should have two such dissimilar halves, the second of which appears to allow for an empty category to lack an antecedent" (1981 : 102)

Kayne proposes the following formulation of ECP :

- (4) Empty Category Principle (ECP)

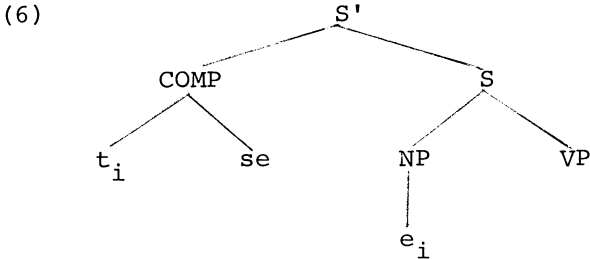
An empty category β must have an antecedent α such that (1) α governs β or (2) α c-commands β and there exists a lexical category X such that X governs β and α is contained in some percolation of X.

Consider, now, the following Krio sentence :³

- (5) údá_i ùnà mím̀bà (_S t_i sé (_S e_i dè kám?))
 who-you-think- that- PROG-come
 "who_i do you think that e_i is coming?"

As things stand, (5) poses a problem for both (1) and (4), since the empty category in subject position (e_i) is not properly governed. Given the fact that COMP_i branches (since it contains both t_i and sé_i), t_i does not c-command (hence, does not govern) e_i . More precisely, (5) has the following structure (irrelevant

details omitted) :



In this paper, I shall attempt to provide a coherent explanation for the ECP violation in (5) and (6). More precisely, I shall attempt to show that what (5) and (6) illustrate is an apparent (rather than a real) ECP violation. I shall also consider the question of whether ECP should be formulated in terms of an antecedent, as suggested by Kayne. The rest of the article is organised as follows. In section 1, the nature of the that-complementizer se will be examined more closely. Evidence will be given to show that se has properties which distinguish it from English that. In section 2, evidence against WH-movement as a rule of Krio grammar will be provided. This, in turn, will call for a reanalysis of the problem under study. In section 3, the question of whether ECP should refer to an antecedent will be examined. Section 4 is the conclusion. The theoretical implications of the analysis will be presented in this section.

1. On the Nature of se

One particularity of Krio is that the choice of a complementizer depends on the semantic value of the matrix verb.⁵ Regarding se, Williams (1976:177) remarks:⁶

- (7) "The complementizer se is found to occur almost exclusively with three groups of verbs : verbs of saying, psychological verbs, and sensory verbs" (Williams' italics).

The use of se as a complementizer is illustrated in (8):⁷

- (8) a. à bìn yèrí (S, sé (S John dè kám))
 I-PAST-hear- that- John-PROG-come
 "I heard that John was coming"
- b. ì bìn mémbà (S, sé (S ùnà gò kám))
 he-PAST-think- that- you-PROS-come
 "he thought that you would come"

However, sé has a particularity. It is also a verb ("say"), as in (9) :

- (9) a. John bìn sé ùnà fḍ kám
 John-PAST-say-you-OBL-come
 "John said you should come"
- b. wétín ì bìn sé? "what did he say?"
 what-he-PAST-say

sé is therefore, at once a verb ("say") and a that-complementizer. There is, as such, one fundamental difference between Krio sé and English that, namely, that sé (unlike that) is a lexical (-N+V) element. As a lexical element, sé can be a proper governor.

2. Evidence against WH-Movement in Krio

The construction known as the cleft predicate (CP) is found in a number of African and creole languages. (10) and (11) are Krio examples of CP :

- (10) nà álà_i John dè ála_i
 it is-shout-John-PROG-shout
 "what John is doing is shouting"
 (lit. "it is shout that John is shouting")
- (11) nà wákà_i à bìn dè wákà_i
 it is-walk-I-PAST-PROG-walk
 "what I was doing was walking"
 (lit. "it is walk that I was walking")

Consider, now, Muysken's (1978) analysis of CP.¹⁰ Muysken points out that CP involves not WH-movement, but, rather, base-generation and coindexation. Let us assume, for a unified analysis of WH-phenomena in Krio, that the language lacks a WH-movement rule. Then (5) (repeated here as (12)) must be reanalysed as (12') :

- (12) údá_i ùnà mímbà (s_i t_i sé (s_{e_i} dè kám?))
 who-you-think- that- PROG-come
 "who_i do you think that e_i is coming?"
- (12') údá_i ùnà mímbà (s_i sé (s_{e_i} dè kám?))

In (12'), (i) COMP does not branch and (ii) the empty category in subject position (e_i) is properly governed from COMP by the lexical item sé.¹¹ Under this analysis, there is no longer any ECP violation.

3. Should ECP Refer to an Antecedent?

Consider the contrast in grammaticality between the following impersonal constructions :

- (13) a. ì tán lèkè sé John dè kám
 it-appears-like-that-John-PROG-come
 "it appears that John is coming"
 b. *ì tán lèkè sé e_i dè kám
 it-appears-like-that- PROG-come
 "it appears that e_i is coming"

The ungrammaticality of (13b) is surprising, since the relationship between sé and e_i is the same in (13b) as in (12'), repeated here as (14) :

- (14) údá_i ùnà mímà (s_i sé (s_i e_i dè kám?))
 "who_i do you think that e_i is coming?"

Consider, however, the contrast in grammaticality between (13b) and (15) :

- (15) údá_i ì tán lèkè sé e_i dè kám?
 who-it-appears-like-that- PROG-come
 "who_i does it appear that e_i is coming?"

Like (13b) vs. (15) is (14) vs. (14') :

- (14') *ùnà mímà (s_i sé (s_i e_i dè kám))
 you-think- that- PROG-come
 "you think that e_i is coming"

Before accounting for the difference in grammaticality between the above pairs, let us consider the contrast between (16a) and (16b) :

- (16) a. John bìn kám "John came"
 John-PAST-come
 b. *e_i bìn kám "e_i came"
 -PAST-come

The ungrammaticality of (16b) shows that Krio is not a pro-drop language. As such, an empty category will only be permitted in Krio if it has an antecedent. The ungrammaticality of (13b) and (14') can then be attributed to the absence of antecedents for the empty categories in the sentences. Since (13b) vs. (15) and (14) vs. (14') involves the presence vs. the absence of an antecedent, it can safely be concluded that ECP should be formulated in terms of an antecedent. (See also 4.I below.)

Alternatively, the ungrammaticality of (13b) and (14') can be explained if we assume that every empty category in every language must be identified as one of the following types : (a) little pro (b) PRO (c) a variable (d) an anaphor. The empty categories in (13b) and (14') cannot be little pros, given the ungrammaticality of (15b). They cannot be PROs, since they are not controlled by any element. They cannot be variables, since they are not operator-bound. Nor are they anaphors, since they are not argument-bound.

4. Conclusion

The theoretical implications of the foregoing analysis can be summarised in four points, namely :

I. ECP must be formulated in terms of an antecedent, as suggested by Kayne (1981). Such a formulation neatly accounts for the ungrammaticality of (13b) and (14').

II. Since Krio does not permit null nominative subjects,¹² but does have that-t structures, it must be concluded that there is no correlation between the presence of null subjects and that-t structures in a language, as pointed out by Rouveret (1980 : 105).¹³

III. Kayne's approach requires the antecedent of a (governed) empty category to be contained in a (percolation) projection of the governor. In (14), the empty category (e_i) is governed by sé, and has its antecedent (údá)¹ in S'. However, the question of whether COMP or V is the head of S' does not arise (or arises in rather different terms) in the case of Krio,¹⁴ since sé has complementizer and verbal properties.

IV. The grammaticality of (15) shows that S is not a bounding node in Krio. The analysis assumed is that of (15'). As can be seen, e_i is separated from its antecedent (údá) by two S nodes :¹⁵

(15') údá₁ (S ì tán (pp lèkè (S, sé(S e_i dè kám?))))

II

I

NOTES

*. Preliminary versions of this paper can be found in two articles ("Should ECP refer to an Antecedent? Evidence from Krio" and "COMP, Government and the ECP") submitted to Linguistic Inquiry (LI) for publication. (neither article was published.) I wish to thank some anonymous LI reviewers for their comments on the papers in question. In some instances, however, I have chosen not to follow their advice. Some of the issues raised here are also discussed (from different perspectives)

in Nylander (1981,1982a,1982b). The usual disclaimers apply.

1. Chomsky (1981 : 250) defines proper government as follows :

Consider structure (i)

(i) (β γ α γ ), where

(a) $\alpha = X^0$ or is coindexed with γ

(b) where \emptyset is a maximal projection, if \emptyset dominates γ then \emptyset dominates α

(c) α c-commands γ

In this case, α governs γ

α properly governs β if and only if α governs β (and $\alpha \neq \text{AGR}$).

2. Kayne's study is based on examples mainly from French. See Aoun (1981) for a summary of Kayne's position.

3. Krio is an "English-based" creole language spoken in Sierra Leone and other parts of West Africa. (On pidgins and creoles in Africa, see Berry (1971). On Krio more specifically, see Jones (1971).)

A word of caution is in order, since some readers may not be acquainted with features of creole languages. The lexicon of Krio is mainly from English. Jones (1971:69) points out that "something like four-fifths of what may be called the kernel lexicon of Krio is derived from English." Phonologically and syntactically, however, Krio is far removed from English. For example, phonologically, Krio is a tone language. (See, in this regard, Coker (1977), Coomber (1969), Fyle & Jones (1980), Johnson (1974) and Nylander (1979).) In this article, the tones are noted as follows : / (high tone) \ (low tone).

Syntactically, Krio is characterised by constructions typical of West African languages (Givón (1979), Jones (1971)). As Givón (1979:12-13) points out :

In looking at Krio, one is immediately struck by the following dichotomy : The bulk of the vocabulary comes from English. But the bulk of the grammar is unmistakably Kwa. The English derived lexicon has been fully adapted into the Kwa mold.

(Kwa is the name of a group of languages spoken in West Africa. The best known of these languages are Yoruba and Igbo.) For this reason, Givón classifies Krio as an African-based (rather than an English-based) creole language.

As regards the verb system, Krio has a number of preverbal markers. (On creole verb systems, see Muysken (1981). On the Krio verb system, see Jones (1968,1971).) The following abbreviations will be used: PROG=progressive aspect; PROS = prospective mood.

4. ECP accounts for the difference in grammaticality between (i) and (ii) as follows. In (i), the presence of that in COMP prevents the trace in COMP (t_i) from counting as the local antecedent of e_i . In (ii), in the absence of that, t_i counts as the local antecedent of e_i .

(i) *Who_i do you think (_S t_i that (_S e_i came?))

(ii) Who_i do you think (_S t_i (_S e_i came?))

Since (i) is the English equivalent of (5), it is legitimate to wonder the effect of sé-deletion (or non insertion of sé) is, in Krio. As I have elsewhere (Nylander (1981)) pointed out, (5) becomes ungrammatical in the absence of the complementizer. (On the non deletability of complementizers in creole languages, see Givón (1979:24).) Note, however, that even if the absence of sé had any effect, the grammaticality of (5), which has a branching COMP, would still have to be accounted for.

5. Krio is, in this respect, like Standard Arabic-- see Aoun (1981).

6. For other studies on Krio complementation, see Givón (1980), Larimore (1976) and Nylander (1981, 1982a, 1982b).

7. See Williams (1976:177-178) for other examples.

8. In her classic study, Lord (1976) lists over thirty languages in which a given form is ambiguous between the verb say and a that-complementizer.

9. See Bynoe-Andriolo & Yillah (1975). (Note, also, that in (10 (and (11), CP corresponds to an English pseudocleft construction.)

10. Muysken's study is based on Papiamentu, a creole language whose structure is similar to that of Krio.

11. On (lexically filled) COMP as a governor, see Bennis (1981), Mc A'Nulty (1981), Rouveret (1980) and Safir & Pesetsky (1981).

12. See also Nylander (1981).

13. Rouveret's remark also applies to (i) Icelandic and at least one dialect of Dutch (Maling & Zaenen (1978)) and (ii) Papiamentu (Brame (1981:287), Muysken (1977) and Nylander (1981:Appendix II).

14. On V as the head of S', see Jackendoff (1977) and Kayne (1981). On COMP as the head of S', see Kayne (1982) and Stowell (1981).

15. In other words, if S were a bounding node, (15') would violate Subjacency (Chomsky (1973,1977)). Given the grammaticality of (15'), it can further be concluded that at most one out of PP and S' is a bounding node in Krio.

REFERENCES

- Aoun, Y. (1981) "ECP, Move α , and Subjacency," Linguistic Inquiry 12 : 637-645.
- Bennis, H. (1981) "A Note on Government and Binding," in R. May & J. Koster (eds) Levels of Syntactic Representation, Foris Publications, Dordrecht.
- Berry, J. (1971) "Pidgins and Creoles in Africa," in T.A. Sebeok (ed) Current Trends in African Linguistics 7, Mouton, The Hague/Paris.
- Brame, M. (1981) "Trace Theory with Filters vs. Lexically Based Syntax without," Linguistic Inquiry 12 : 275-293.
- Burke, V. & J. Pustejovsky (eds) (1981) Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the North Eastern Linguistics Society, Graduate Linguistics Student Association, University of Massachusetts at Amherst.
- Bynoe-Andriolo, E.Y. & M.S. Yillah (1975) "Predicate Clefting in Afro-European Creoles," Ohio State University Working Papers in Linguistics 20 : 234-239.
- Chomsky, N. (1973) "Conditions on Transformations," in S. Anderson & P. Kiparsky (eds) A Festschrift for Morris Halle, Holt Rinehart & Winston, New York.
- Chomsky, N. (1977) "On WH-Movement," in P. Culicover, T. Wasow & A. Akmajian (eds) Formal Syntax, Academic Press, New York.
- Chomsky, N. (1981) Lectures on Government and Binding, Foris Publications, Dordrecht.
- Coker, E. (1977) Etudes linguistiques sur le créole de la Sierra-Leone, unpublished thèse de doctorat de troisième cycle thesis, Université de Montpellier.
- Coomber, M.E.A. (1969) A Descriptive Study of Krio Phonology, unpublished M.Sc thesis, Georgetown University.
- Fyle, C.N. & E.D. Jones (1980) A Krio-English Dictionary, OUP/Sierra Leone University Press, Oxford/Freetown.
- Givón, T. (1979) "Prolegomena to any Sane Creology," in I.F. Hancock (ed) Readings in Creole Studies, Scientific Publishers, Ghent (Belgium).
- Givón, T. (1980) "The Binding Hierarchy and the Typology of Complements," Studies in Language 4 : 333-337.
- Jackendoff, R. (1977) X' Syntax : A Study of Phrase Structure, MIT Press Massachusetts.
- Johnson, A.C. (1974) A Linguistic Study of Krio Tones, unpublished M.Phil thesis, University of Leeds.
- Jones, E. (1968) "Some Tense, Mode and Aspect Markers in Krio," African Language Review 7 : 86-89.

- Jones, E. (1971) "Krio : An English-based Language of Sierra Leone," in J. Spencer (ed) The English Language in West Africa, Longman, London.
- Kayne, R.S. (1981) "ECP Extensions," Linguistic Inquiry 12 : 93-133.
- Kayne, R.S. (1982) "Predicates and Arguments, Verbs and Nouns." GLOW talk. (Abstract in GLOW Newsletter 8, p. 24.)
- Larimore, N.K. (1976) A Comparison of Predicate Complementation in Krio and English, unpublished doctoral thesis, Northwestern University.
- Lord, C. (1976) "Evidence for Syntactic Reanalysis : From Verb to Complementizer in Kwa," in S. Steever, C. Walker & S. Mufwene (eds) Papers from the Parasession on Diachronic Syntax, Chicago Linguistic Society, Chicago.
- Maling, J. & A. Zaenen (1978) "On the Non-Universality of a Surface Filter," Linguistic Inquiry 9:475-497.
- Mc A'Nulty, J. (1981) "ECP est-il local?" Revue québécoise de linguistique 11.1 : 149-191.
- Muysken, P. (1977) "Movement Rules in Papiamentu," Amsterdam Creole Studies 1 : 80-102.
- Muysken, P. (1978) "Three Types of Fronting Constructions in Papiamentu," in F. Jansen (ed) Studies on Fronting, Peter de Ridder Press, Lisse.
- Muysken, P. (1981) "Creole Tense/Mood/Aspect Systems : The Unmarked Case?" in P. Muysken (ed) Generative Studies on Creole Languages, Foris Publications, Dordrecht.
- Nylander, D.K. (1979) "Aspects of Krio Tonology and their Implications for Lexicography," unpublished paper, McGill University. (Text of a paper presented at the annual meeting of the New York State Council on Linguistics, SUNY, Buffalo, November, 1979.)
- Nylander, D.K. (1981) "Le Filtre WH," unpublished paper, McGill University. (Text of a paper presented at the Visages, virages, mirages de la linguistique colloquium, Université de Paris-VIII, June, 1981.)
- Nylander, D.K. (1982a) "Serial Verbs, the that-trace Filter and the Empty Category Principle," unpublished paper, McGill University/Université de Grenoble-III.
- Nylander, D.K. (1982b) "Serial Verbs and ECP Violations in Krio," paper read at the 13th Annual Conference on African Linguistics, Université du Québec à Montréal, April 30-May 2, 1982.
- Rouveret, A. (1980) "Sur la notion de proposition finie," Langages 60 : 75-107.
- Safir, K. & D. Pesetsky (1981) "Inflection, Inversion and Subject Clitics," in Burke & Pustejovsky (1981).

- Stowell, T. (1981) "Complementizers and the Empty Category Principle," in Burke & Pustejovsky (1981).
Williams, W.R. (1976) Linguistic Change in the Syntax and Semantics of Sierra Leone Krio, unpublished doctoral thesis, Indiana University.

Department of French & Spanish,
University of Manitoba,
Winnipeg, Manitoba,
Canada R3T 2N2.